

CHESTER TIMES – March 22, 1912 – HOME LIFE AT GLEN MILLS REFORM SCHOOL – Interesting Description of Well Known Delaware County Institution

The West Chester Local News contains the following interesting article concerning home life at Glen Mills School:

Last evening, at the regular meeting of the Chestnut Street Friends' Reading Circle, Miss Margaret Means, a parole officer of the Girls' Home, at Glen Mills House of Refuge, gave an interesting talk for an hour or more, describing the methods of living, teaching and training the girls who are placed in the care of the officials of a great and beneficial change since the school was removed from Philadelphia and new methods are employed.

Miss Means has a pleasing address and talked in a distinct and fluent manner, and also answered understandingly a number of queries propounded. She evidently is in touch with and interested in this excellent eleemosynary institution.

DESCRIPTION OF HOME – The institution, as is known to many, is located near Darlington, or Darling Post Office, on a farm of 100 acres, high ground, and a beautiful situation. The first buildings were completed for occupancy in May, 1907, and a number of girls were sent there from the parent institution, in Philadelphia, which was established about eighty years ago. The other buildings were completed in 1910, when the old school closed and all inmates were transferred to the new plant.

There are about 175 girls at the school at present, 25 per cent of whom are colored. The population varies, however. The colored children are kept in separate houses from the white inmates and only mingle at chapel or religious services. It is thought to be better to keep whites and blacks apart.

HAVE HOMES – The cottage system of living is maintained. There are nine of these in all; the first being the reception hall, where all newcomers are sent; they are permitted to go to appointed honor, or home, cottages, as soon as they indicate they can be trusted. In these cottages there are about 30 to 35 girls, each having a separate room; they eat together in one large room. The cottage is in charge of a matron and a housekeeper.

The girls are called and assemble at 6, have breakfast at 6:30, and then tidy up their room, and do other work. At 8:15 they go to chapel for three-fourths of an hour, where they have Bible reading, singing and announcements.

The school hours are short, and lessons include manual teaching. The girls are all required to learn something; basket making, dress making, cooking, etc., are taught. At the honor homes each attends to her own swing and laundry work.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT – A novel, but very successful feature of the institution is the student government. The girls in each cottage have a mayor, council, judge and clerks and hold court. When a student commits an offense against the rules court is held and cases tried, and if the defendant student is found guilty the officers fix the punishment, usually of a mild type. These offenses usually consist of not being neat, or clean in their work, etc. A health officer – a girl student – makes inspection every morning. The punishment is frequently sent to bed without supper. The system works very well, being carefully supervised by the school officials.

Miss Means gave some interesting and humorous incidents of these trials. She said they also held town meetings, at which all students assemble and are allowed to tell their troubles, if any, and refer them to the officials. At certain periods state councils are held and problems discussed.

The girls have no regular uniform, but are dressed plainly, generally in gingham dresses; on Sundays they have a better costume. Prizes are given for neatness. The Mayor of a cottage community looks the girls over and prompts them in this matter

They have plenty of amusements; considerable gymnasium recreation in winter and much baseball in summer. Each cottage has a nine and rivalry is great. Prize cups are awarded. They also have high and broad jumping and track work.

**SCHOOL ROOM WORK** – Students are graded; they are taught the common branches first, up to high school grades, and have manual work besides. As an experiment, teachers go from room to room, which interest students and relieves their nerves by a change. Music is also taught, many of the girls have talent. Many of the girls go to the home in a deplorable condition, but they are not to blame; their environments and associations were bad. They generally improve and enter into the home life at Glen Mills with zest and learn quickly.

They are of different religions – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jew. Their religious views, if any, are not interfered with; there are services for each denomination.

The girls are all given an hour for rest after dinner, spent alone in each ones room which has a wholesome effect and they go to work afterwards very cheerful.

The lecturer then described the methods of worship, home instruction and many other interesting matters. She said, in answer to a query, that generally the colored students were not as bright as the whites and more apt to be feeble minded and physically weaker, etc., although there were exceptions.

**GIRLS DO FARM WORK** – The students do much farm work; each girl has a plot of ground which is cultivated by her carefully. The girls are taken out of afternoons, one cottage community at a time. They are greatly interested and work hard. Prizes are awarded the best growers. A graduate of Cornell University instructs the girls in the work. They also learn to milk, raise chickens, ride and care for horses, etc., and attend to pigs, etc. They enjoy it and it is healthy amusement and relieves the pent up reserve nerve force in a good way. There isn't any time for bad conduct.

They have a store system also. Every other Saturday a store is opened and girls can purchase ribbons, soap, pen knives, etc., but not too much candy. They have spending money, either earned or sent by friends. They have opportunities to earn a little money by extra work. There is a splendid library in the school and it is much patronized; the librarian selects groups of the best books for certain aged girls, from which each selects; they are very prompt in returning the books, being prompted by each other, as it counts to be on time.

At times well behaved girls are permitted to go to Philadelphia with a caretaker. After two years, if well behaved, the girls are found homes in good families and are generally satisfactory. They are kept under surveillance.

Girls are often homesick at first, but this soon wears off, after that few runaway and are happy. They grow robust and cheerful. Their friends or relatives are permitted to visits them once a month and bring them certain articles.

The speaker then gave some incidents of farm and home life, among them a corn husking contest which was lots of fun. The architectural arrangement of the cottages and many other things were described also. The lecture was interesting and gave a better understanding of this institution, which is at a prison or place of restraint, but a happy, well-conducted home, accomplishing what many girls' real home would not.

Miss Eynthia Embree, a matron of one of the cottages, then told several interesting and humorous phases of the school life, showing that many girls would rather live at the institution than at home.

After some remarks by Edward Savery, President of the Reading Circle, who complimented and thanked the speakers, the meeting adjourned.

KEITH LOCKHART COLLECTION